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DISARMAMENT COMMISSION

VERBATIM RECORD OF THE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-THIRD MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 14 December 1993, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. ARAUJO CASTRO (Brazil)

- Organizational matters
- Election of the Chairman and other officers
- Other business
- Closure of the session

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

The CHAIRMAN: At the meeting we held on 9 December the Disarmament Commission was able to take decisions on a number of organizational matters relating to our 1994 substantive session: first, the provisional agenda for that session; secondly, the establishment of subsidiary bodies, including three working groups; thirdly, the date and the duration of the 1994 substantive session; and, fourthly, the general programme of work for the 1994 substantive session.

The Commission decided to postpone the election of members of the Bureau for 1994, as well as the appointment of the Chairmen of its three Working Groups, because of ongoing consultations between and within the different regional groups. Accordingly, today we are ready to take up these items for action.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND OTHER OFFICERS

The CHAIRMAN: We will deal first with the election of the Chairman of the Commission for 1994.

In accordance with the established principle of rotation, the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission for its 1994 session is expected to come from the Group of African States.

Mr. KHALIL (Egypt) (interpretation from Arabic): It is an honour and a pleasure, Sir, to present the candidature of His Excellency Ambassador René Valéry Mongbe, Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations, to be your successor as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission.

Ambassador Mongbe received his bachelor's degree in political science in 1965 and went on to obtain a postgraduate diploma in 1968.

(Mr. Khalil, Egypt)

He began work in Benin in 1966, eventually reaching one of its highest positions, becoming a member of the High Council of State and Chairman of its Committee on Foreign Relations, Sovereignty and Defence. His long diplomatic experience includes service as Ambassador of his country since 1975, first to Zaire and Gabon, also being accredited to the Congo and Angola.

He was also the Director of the Office of International Organizations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1987, when he followed the work of the First Committee. He was appointed Permanent Representative of his country to the United Nations in 1990. During his period in New York, he has held many positions and chaired many committees. For a time he was a Vice-President of the General Assembly.

I am confident that Ambassador Mongbe's expertise and his deep knowledge of the mechanisms of the United Nations, as well as his general expertise in the field of disarmament, will contribute greatly to the success of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission for 1994.

I would be remiss, Sir, if I failed to thank you for undertaking to direct the work of the Commission during the past session, and I wish you all success. I also wish the utmost success to Ambassador Mongbe, who is truly the best successor of the best predecessor.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement, in the course of which he presented the candidacy of Ambassador René Valéry Mongbe of Benin for the chairmanship of the Commission for 1994. I am pleased to inform members of the Commission that the Chairman of the Group of African States for the

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month of December has also conveyed to me the formal endorsement by the Group of that candidacy.As all members are aware, Ambassador René Valéry Mongbe is a very well-known and respected career diplomat who has been serving with great distinction as the Permanent Representative of Benin to the United Nations since 1990. Prior to his present post, as mentioned by the representative of Egypt, he held a number of important posts. He served the Embassy of Benin in Paris, he was Ambassador to Zaire, the Congo and Angola, and he held a number of positions in his country, including those of Head of the Office of International Organizations, and Director-General of the Foreign Ministry.

Among the activities he has carried out as Permanent Representative of his country in New York, Ambassador Mongbe was Chairman of the Commission on Transnational Corporations and Vice-Chairman of the Economic Committee of the Economic and Social Council. Ambassador Mongbe is currently the Chairman of the Second Committee of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, a post which I am certain we all agree he has been filling with remarkable diplomatic skill, and with a special talent for consensus-building on difficult issues.

His delegation has had an active and constructive role in the work of the First Committee of the General Assembly, and in the work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission. I am very confident that under the leadership of Ambassador René Valéry Mongbe of Benin, the Disarmament Commission will be able to discharge its mandate in a most successful manner in 1994.

May I add, on a personal note, that it is particularly gratifying for me to witness the nomination to the chairmanship of the Commission of this distinguished diplomat from Benin, an

(The Chairman)

African country of the South Atlantic region with which Brazil has long enjoyed very close ties of friendship and cooperation.

If I hear no comments, I shall take it that it is the wish of the Commission that Ambassador René Valéry Mongbe of Benin be elected Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for 1994 by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I now declare Ambassador René Valéry Mongbe elected Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for the year 1994.

Mr. MONGBE (Benin) (interpretation from French): At the moment when it is the turn of Africa to preside over the proceedings of the Disarmament Commission, it is an honour for Benin to be charged with this responsibility for 1994. For me personally, it is a privilege to assume this responsibility on behalf of Benin. The delegation of Benin wishes to express its gratitude to all the members of the Commission for this mark of confidence.

The Disarmament Commission is an important element of the multilateral disarmament machinery; it provides a framework for the efforts of Member States in concentrating on negotiating agreements to control and limit the proliferation of armaments, in the interests of world peace.

Despite the optimism which greeted the end of the planetary rivalries that had led to the strengthening of the aggressive capacities of States to the point of over-armament, this long-sought peace is now extremely fragile, because it has been resisted by forces which threaten basic values. The continual promotion of collective security involving all States is necessary in order better to serve the peace for which we are brought together. The

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

work of the Disarmament Commission is carried out within this context.

The delegation of Benin wishes to pay tribute to you, Mr. Chairman, Ambassador of Brazil. As you yourself said, it is not merely geography which links Brazil and Benin; we are also bound by history. As you are well aware, names such as yours can be found in Benin, and words of your language, Portuguese, particularly the version spoken in Brazil, are part of our own national language. There are very important cultural affinities between our two countries, and it is thus only natural that I succeed you in this position. We are simply repeating what Benin and Brazil have always done, both geographically and historically.

I will be very happy to work with a team as competent as that of the secretariat which has helped us until now. I will be only too happy to work with the eminent members of this Commission, who have always helped you, Mr. Chairman, in the discharge of your honourable duties.

The task ahead of us in 1994 is a considerable one. In addition to the preliminary consideration of the new item on the agenda relating to international arms transfers, we must conclude our deliberations on two important points in particular: the process of nuclear disarmament within the framework of international security, with the purpose of eliminating nuclear weapons, and the role of science and technology in the framework of international security and disarmament.

We know that Benin can count on all members for the attainment of the goal we all share, while consistently applying the

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

recommendations on the rationalization of the Commission's work, which continue to prove to be effective.

Before concluding, I should like to thank the representative of Egypt, who, on behalf of the African Group, undertook the agreeable duty of nominating Benin for the chairmanship of the Commission.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to thank the Ambassador of Benin, Chairman of the Disarmament Commission for 1994, for the extremely thoughtful and kind words he addressed to me and to the relationship between our two countries, which, as he recalled, has a long-standing strong historic and cultural foundation. My country has a great deal of interest in, and sympathy and friendship for, Benin, and it was most pleasant to hear him express similar sentiments. I congratulate him on his election and assure him of my cooperation and that of all delegations in the exercise of his challenging functions in 1994. We all look forward to working under his leadership in the coming year.

We shall now proceed to the election of the other members of the Bureau for 1994, namely, the Vice-Chairmen and the Rapporteur. In this connection, I am pleased to announce that the Group of African States has endorsed the candidacy of Mauritius for one of the vice-chairmanships; that the Group of Asian States has endorsed the candidacies of Jordan and Pakistan for vice-chairmanships; and that the Group of Eastern European States has endorsed the candidacy of Poland for another of the vice-chairmanships, on the understanding that it may wish to nominate a second candidate for Vice-Chairman and that it may do so at any time prior to the 1994 substantive session. The Group of Latin American and Caribbean States has nominated Cuba for a vice-chairmanship, and, finally,

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the Group of Western European and Other States has endorsed the candidacies of Austria and Sweden for vice-chairmanships.

If I hear no comment, I shall take it that the Disarmament Commission wishes to elect the representatives of Mauritius, Jordan, Pakistan, Poland, Cuba, Austria and Sweden as Vice-Chairmen of the Commission for 1994 by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now proceed to the election of the Rapporteur of the Commission for 1994. As previously announced, the candidate for that post should come from the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. In this regard, I am pleased to announce that the Group has nominated Mr. José Manuel Ovalle of Chile to the post of Rapporteur for the Commission for 1994.

If I hear no comment, I shall take it that the Commission wishes to elect Mr. José Manuel Ovalle as Rapporteur of the Disarmament Commission for 1994 by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to extend my congratulations to the seven Vice-Chairmen on their election and to Mr. Ovalle of Chile on his election as Rapporteur. I am sure that they will all make a very important contribution to the work of the Commission in 1994, working together with Ambassador Mongbe of Benin in carrying out the mandate which has been entrusted to the Commission by the General Assembly.

Mr. OVALLE (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and the outgoing Bureau on the fine work you have done during 1993. I am certain that your example will inspire us in the coming year.

(Mr. Ovalle, Chile)

I should like also to convey my congratulations to the newly-elected Chairman, an eminent diplomat from Benin. I am sure that he will lead our work with great skill next year, thus meeting the expectations of the international community on so delicate and important a matter as disarmament.

Finally, I wish to thank the Latin American and Caribbean Group for the honour it has bestowed on me. As an expression of gratitude for the trust it has placed in me, I commit myself to work with all my ability in the pursuit of our goals.

The CHAIRMAN: We will now proceed to the appointment of the Chairmen of subsidiary bodies for the 1994 session.

As I mentioned earlier, at its last meeting the Commission decided to renew and establish the mandates of the subsidiary bodies for the 1994 substantive session. We shall now proceed formally to appoint the Chairman of each of the three Working Groups.

I wish to draw the attention of the members of the Commission to paragraph 4, sub-paragraph 1, of the adopted document entitled "Ways and means to enhance the functioning of the Disarmament Commission" which reads inter alia:

> "The allocation of the agenda items to the four subsidiary bodies and the appointment of chairmen for these subsidiary bodies should be decided at the organizational session of the Commission, taking into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution." (A/CN.10/137)

I am pleased to inform the Commission that as a result of consultations that were held between and within the regional groups, the arrangements that are proposed for the Commission's

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approval for the chairmanship of the three working groups for 1994 are as follows.

As previously agreed at the 1993 session, Ambassador Victor Batiouk of Ukraine will continue to chair Working Group I on the item entitled "Process of nuclear disarmament in the framework of international peace and security, with the objective of the elimination of nuclear weapons".

As I announced at our last meeting, following consultations in the Group of Western European and Other States, the name of Ambassador Peggy Mason of Canada has been presented for the chairmanship of Working Group II on the item entitled "The role of science and technology in the context of international security, disarmament and other related fields".

Finally, following consultations between the Latin American and Caribbean Group and the Asian Group, Ambassador Luis Fernando Jaramillo, Permanent Representative of Colombia, has been proposed by both Groups to chair Working Group III on the item entitled "International arms transfers, with particular reference to resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991".

If I hear no comment, may I take it that the Commission wishes to appoint these three Chairmen by acclamation?

It was so decided.

The CHAIRMAN: I wish to extend my very warmest congratulations to Ambassador Victor Batiouk, Ambassador Peggy Mason and Ambassador Luis Fernando Jaramillo on their appointment as Chairmen of the three Working Groups. I am sure that with the Working Groups under the able leadership of these distinguished diplomats the Commission will be able to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly.

OTHER BUSINESS

The CHAIRMAN: Let me refer to a minor technical point that I thought it would be useful to bring to the attention of members. Members will recall that the First Committee adopted its draft resolution A/C.1/48/L.3/Rev.1, on the report of the Disarmament Commission, under agenda item 73 (a). Paragraph 11 of that draft resolution recommends that the Disarmament Commission, at its 1993 organizational session, adopt the items it mentions for consideration and conclusion, and paragraph 12 recommends that the Disarmament Commission, at its 1993 organizational session, include a new item on the agenda.

It has been pointed out to me that, since the draft resolution has not yet been adopted in plenary meeting, it might be advisable to introduce certain drafting changes in the text. Obviously, the forum for this would not be the Disarmament Commission; if members feel such changes would be useful, they could possibly be introduced through the Rapporteur of the First Committee when the Committee's reports are presented for consideration in plenary meeting, which I understand will be in the afternoon of Thursday, 16 December.

One possibility is simply to change the lead word from "recommends" to "notes" in paragraphs 11 and 12, as the Disarmament

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Commission has already taken these decisions. The revised paragraph 11 could begin

"Notes that the Disarmament Commission, at its 1993 organizational session, adopted the following items ...".

And the revised paragraph 12 could begin

"Notes that the Disarmament Commission decided to include in the agenda ...".

If members are in agreement, I could perhaps write a letter to the Rapporteur of the First Committee, mentioning that this point was raised today and suggesting that it might be appropriate to introduce oral revisions when the relevant report is considered by the General Assembly at next Thursday's plenary meeting. Does the Commission agree that I should write such a letter?

It was so decided.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

The CHAIRMAN: Let me conclude by thanking all members for all their cooperation throughout the year as we strove to fulfil our challenging mandate. I have already had the opportunity to present what in my view was a positive assessment of the substantive work we did and of the very strong ground we prepared for the future work of the Commission.

In 1994 the Commission will be expected to conclude its work on two items: the item on nuclear disarmament and the item on science and technology. It will also begin consideration of the item on international arms transfers. That is quite a work-load, but I am very confident that under the leadership of Ambassador Mongbe of Benin and with the assistance of all the other members of the Bureau - and, in particular, with the cooperation and very able guidance of the Chairmen of the three Working

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Groups - the Commission will be able to carry it out, always counting on the support of the secretariat and the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, which has always proved to be extremely capable and competent in the support it provides to the Commission.

I thank all members for the kindness they have shown me throughout the year as I exercised my functions as Chairman of the Disarmament Commission.

I declare closed the 1993 organizational session of the Disarmament Commission.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.